



NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

August 18, 2020



Compiled by Brent Hunt, Naval History and Heritage Command's Communication and Outreach Division

Welcome to Navy History Matters—our weekly compilation of articles, commentaries, and blogs related to history and heritage. Every week we'll gather the top-interest items from a variety of media and social media sources and then link you to related content at NHHC's website ([history.navy.mil](https://www.history.navy.mil)), your authoritative source for Navy history.

★ H-Gram 052

In his latest H-Gram, NHHC Director [Sam Cox](#) covers the critical role of U.S. Navy personnel in the development and employment of the first atomic bombs and, moving forward to 1989, the first month of [Operation Desert Shield](#). "This series is a departure from my normal H-grams in that it is a personal recollection. I was a lieutenant commander intelligence officer and the Iraq subject matter expert on the intelligence staff of Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, for the entirety of Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm, serving under Vice Adm. Hank Mauz and Vice Adm. Stan Arthur. I first wrote this account a number of years after the fact, but I kept it true to what I believed and understood to be true at the time, so my dim view of joint operations as conducted during Desert Storm (which held the Navy back from making its maximum contribution to the war) and U.S. Central Command, particularly the intelligence support architecture, will be readily apparent. My penance for this heresy would be to spend 12 of the next 21 years in joint commands, including three years as commander of the U.S. Central Command Joint Intelligence Center, where I had the opportunity to see vast improvement in U.S. joint operations." For more, [read H-Gram 052](#) at the [Director's Corner](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-106000/NH-106911-KN.html>

★ WWII@75: First Japanese Surrender

On Aug. 22, 1945, Japanese on the Mili Atoll in the Marshall Islands surrendered onboard [USS Levy](#)—the first Japanese surrender of [World War II](#). Capt. Masanari Shiga, commander of the Imperial Japanese navy's 66th Guard Unit and the senior officer on Mili, surrendered the garrison. Japan gained control of Mili Atoll when it seized German possessions in the South Seas in October 1914. The atoll was heavily fortified during the war, with a radar station, seaplane base, landing strips, and a garrison of more than 5,000 men by 1943. Mili was initially bypassed by U.S. forces over the course of WWII and isolated. Capt. H. D. Grow negotiated with the Japanese and accepted their surrender. NHHC's collection includes the [pen used during the surrender ceremony](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nara-series/80-g/80-G-490000/80-G-490369.html>

★ National Aviation Day

In observance of the anniversary of Orville Wright's birthday, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established in 1939 that Aug. 19 would be [National Aviation Day](#). The purpose of Roosevelt's proclamation was to encourage U.S. citizens to observe the day with activities that promote interest in aviation. [NHHC](#) has plenty of information on [naval aviation](#), including [paintings](#), [imagery](#), [blogs](#), and the world's largest naval aviation museum—[National Naval Aviation Museum](#) in Pensacola, FL. Check out all of NHHC's resources and make it a great National Aviation Day.

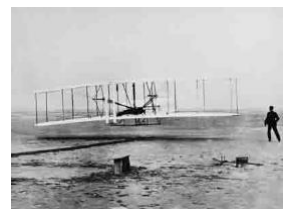


Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/80-G-651000/80-G-651890.html>

★ **USS Constitution Reopens After COVID Hiatus**

After being closed to the public for several months due to the coronavirus pandemic, the [USS Constitution Museum](#) and [USS Constitution](#) reopened Aug. 14. *Constitution's* crew had been conducting virtual tours over the past few months on social media. Guests at the museum and onboard “Old Ironsides” are now required to wear face coverings, and capacity will be limited. The museum requires timed tickets. The ship and the museum will undergo more frequent cleanings as well. *Constitution's* victories at sea during the [War of 1812](#) inspired a nation and helped mark the emergence of the United States as a world-class maritime power. *Constitution* is crewed by a select group of active-duty U.S. Navy Sailors who share her story with visitors. For more, [read the article](#) in *Navy Times*.



Photo Link: <https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2020/08/14/uss-constitution-reopens-after-covid-hiatus/>

★ **WWII Aircraft Arrive in Hawaii for End of War's 75th Anniversary**

Amphibious assault ship [USS Essex](#) recently delivered historic [World War II](#) aircraft to Pearl Harbor, HI, to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of the war. According to organizers, an “Around Oahu” flyover is scheduled for Aug. 29, and a “Connecting the Military Bases” flyover is scheduled for Aug. 30. The flyovers will conclude with a “Fly Over the [Battleship Missouri Memorial](#), Pearl Harbor to Waikiki” on Sept. 2 as part of an official commemoration aboard [Mighty Mo's](#) deck. “We are honored to join the [State of Hawaii](#) in supporting the 75th Commemoration series of events,” said Adm. [Phil Davidson](#), commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. “The World War II warbird aerial performances are a symbolic reminder of our greatest generation’s will and determination that ultimately led to victory. Indeed, the legacy of our World War II heroes lives on in the Pacific.” For more, [read the article](#) in *Navy Times*.



Photo Link: <https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2020/08/12/wwii-aircraft-arrive-in-hawaii-aboard-amphibious-assault-ship-essex-for-end-of-wwiis-75th-anniversary/>

★ **Tucson Commissioned—25 Years Ago**

On Aug. 18, 1995, [USS Tucson](#) was commissioned at Naval Station Norfolk, VA. The submarine is the second to be named for the city in [Arizona](#). The [first Tucson](#) was commissioned in 1945 and earned one battle star during [World War II](#). *Tucson* is the 59th *Los Angeles*-class attack submarine, and the 20th of the improved *Los Angeles*-class attack submarines to be built. [Submarines](#) of the class are the most advanced vessels in the world. Their mission is to hunt down and destroy enemy naval forces, lay mines off enemy ports, provide covert intelligence, support the [Special Forces](#), and conduct cruise missile strikes against targets ashore. The submarine is equipped with 12 vertical launch missile tubes for [Tomahawk cruise missiles](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/naval-subjects-collection/l45--us-navy-ships/281-300/l45-289-02-01-uss-tucson--ssn-770-.html>

★ **SECNAV Establishes History Section**

On Aug. 18, 1918, 102 years ago, the [Secretary of the Navy](#) established a history section under the [Chief of Naval Operations](#) and directed that historical material on [World War I](#) eventually be collected there. The directive emphasized that no hampering or interference with the war effort should be permitted to occur in obtaining information. Recognition of the importance of the historical aspects of naval operations and the growing volume of war records resulted in the appointment of retired Rear Adm. [William W. Kimball](#) as head of the new section. In compliance with the secretary’s order, Adm. [William Sims](#) created a historical section in the staff of the U.S. Naval Forces operating in European waters. In dispatches and correspondence, Sims stressed the importance of adding trained historians to his staff, but before properly qualified officers could be selected for the historical project, Armistice was declared. To learn more, read [Office of Naval Records and Library 1882–1945](#) at [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/research/publications/documentary-histories/wwi/april-1918/illustrations/sims-staff.html>

★ Paul Kennedy: All Hell Broke Loose

Signalman First Class Paul Kennedy was asleep onboard USS Sacramento on the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, when the first wave of Japanese planes set off the ship's alarms. At first, he thought it was just a drill, but a shipmate roused him, "Get up and go! We're under attack—grab your gas mask and helmet." When he got on deck, he saw a low-flying enemy aircraft preparing to drop a torpedo that would later hit USS Oklahoma. Kennedy attempted to man his station but was prevented by another enemy aircraft attempting to bomb *Sacramento*. "[The pilot] starts strafing," he said. "There were bullets landing all around me. I heard them ... hitting and hitting, making chips on the deck, but he missed." *Sacramento* was not seriously damaged during the attack, and Kennedy assisted running cases of 50-caliber ammunition from his ship to a nearby destroyer, USS Mugford, for the remainder of the Pearl Harbor attack. "All hell broke loose that morning," he said. "I didn't think I'd make it. Period. I didn't think I'd live through that." For more on Kennedy, [read the blog](#) at [Vantage Point](#).



Photo Link: https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Paul_Kennedy_AVS_01.jpg

★ Webpage of the Week

On Aug. 19, 2000, 20 years ago, the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Oscar Austin was commissioned at Norfolk, VA. The ship proudly bears the name of U.S. Marine Pfc. Oscar Austin, who received the Medal of Honor posthumously for his actions during the Vietnam War. In commemoration of Austin's namesake ship, this week's Webpage of the Week is the Pfc. Oscar P. Austin page. On the morning of Feb. 23, 1969, Austin's observation post came under a fierce ground attack by a large North Vietnamese army force. After observing that a wounded Marine had fallen unconscious in a position dangerously exposed to hostile fire, Austin left the security of his foxhole and, with complete disregard for his own personal safety, ran across the fire-swept battlefield to move the unconscious Marine to a safe location. As he neared the casualty, an enemy grenade landed nearby. Without hesitation, Austin leaped between the casualty and the grenade, absorbing the detonation. Badly wounded, Austin turned to examine the Marine, and when he did, he saw a North Vietnamese army soldier aiming his weapon at the unconscious Marine. With full knowledge of the consequences and thinking only of his fellow Marine, Austin threw himself between the casualty and the enemy fire. In doing so, he gallantly gave his life for his country.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/people/namesakes/oscar-austin.html>

★ Today in Naval History

On Aug. 18, 1918, the first naval railway gun, a 14-inch, 50 caliber, Mark IV Navy gun mounted on a railway carriage, became operational in St. Nazaire, France, during World War I. There were five operational batteries—one gun each—that would go on to fire 782 14-inch rounds on 25 occasions at strategic targets far behind enemy lines. The weapon was developed in response to Germany's long-range artillery that could hit targets very accurately. Rear Adm. Ralph Earle, who was chief of the U.S. Navy Bureau of Ordnance, led in the development of the rail guns that were placed on a special railroad car. The guns were assembled on the Washington Navy Yard. For more, [read H-Gram 021-3](#).



For more dates in naval history, including your selected span of dates, see [Year at a Glance](#) at [NHHC's website](#). Be sure to check this page regularly, as content is updated frequently.

Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhmc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhmc-series/nh-series/NH-02000/NH-2424.html>